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"The Mysterious Arm"

A Playlet in One Act—One Scene

——By——

C. E. EARLL.

Unpublished Dramatic Composition.

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PROPERTIES.

Two chairs, table, stand, imitation shot gun, two toy pistols, imitation bomb, bottles, glasses, tray, swords, set boxing gloves, two of each to suit scene color, telephones, etc., etc.

DESCRIPTION OF BACK SCENE.

Back built double, holes, doors, windows, moon, clock, animals, trees and various grotesque figures cut through first partition. Second partition set 20 inches back of first section, both being of same color, object cut in first section are not discernable, except when canvas blind of different color is placed between them, viz: Take three pieces paper, two white and one black, cut any design through one white one. Lay design on black sheet, black sheet on other white one. Design shows plainly. Quickly draw black paper and design disappears. Designs may be introduced at will of player by releasing blind or vice versa.

CAST.

Dick Earle ..... Vaudeville manager and practical joker

"Bud" Brown .....Would become an actor, but ——

Bess ..... } Out of sight .....
May ..... }

DESCRIPTION OF SETTING.

Right side of stage, including back, drop, wings and floor covering, colored black.

Left side white. Note—Any two colors of extreme shades may be used. Black and white used here for convenience.

COSTUMES AND FACIAL MAKE-UP.

"Dick"—Right side of hat, face, coat, trousers, and one shoe black. Left side white.

"Bud"—Exact opposite of "Dick."

"Bess"—Face and entire costume, white, except right arm, 3 inches above elbow.

"May"—Exact opposite of Bess.

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"THE MYSTERIOUS ARM"

Characters to be designated thus:

"Dick" (D), "Bud" (Bu), "Bess" (Be), "May" (M).

Curtain rises to (music).

(Music) stops instantly, as blind is released, showing (D) who walks quickly up stage. Assumes dramatic pose. "Ladies and gentlemen, I am about to expose to your view, my masterpiece, the result of my life work (becomes vehement). I have toiled night and day burning midnight oil and, At last! At last! my efforts are crowned with success." Presses button in wall, releasing blind, showing (Bu) in fighting attitude. "See, is it not magnificent? I have named it, "The New White Hope." During following unseen by (Bu) lights cigarette, scratches head, etc., taking care to assume pose when (D) turns head). And in it my hopes are laid, not for filthy lucre, that deafens the ear to the pleadings of poverty, that turns the heart to stone, but for Fame! Fame is all I ask. To prove it: I will present at the close of our engagement here, this wonderful work of art to the most beautiful lady in your city." And "—— as (Bu) gets down, "Well, I'll be ——— (Bu) "Jiggered" (advancing).

(D) Jiggered, is right; you'll make a swell actor, you will, you big boob. You wanted to learn the ropes and when I put you on the real thing you queer the whole works at overture. Suppose we had an audience here—they—— (Bu) interrupts (Bu) Well, ain't it bad enough to be all stuck up with paint and dressed up like a jack-in-the-box, without standing there fighting nobody for a half an hour?

(D) I was nearly through, you Rube.

(Bu) Why didn't you say so? Well, if I can't act, I can sing.

(D) Show me; if you can make good, go to it.

(Bu) (goes down stage) piano "Where's my wandering boy tonight?" Bu sings in strained voice.

(D) (yells) "Police" (music stops instantly) grabs (Bu) rushes him up stage, (Bu) (still singing) places him in centre at where scene colors meet, Bu stops singing — (plaintively).

"Must I die?" (music "Meditation") and I ain't a full-grown man.

(D) "Yes."

(Bu) "Can't I have just a few moments' respite?"

(D) "What for?"

(Bu) "To bid that bartender a last good-bye?"

(D) (tragically) "Enough? I'll (wipes away tear) not grow chicken-hearted in the face of duty, remember. You sang (gets sword) "One," "Two," "Three," rushes at (Bu) (Be) (springs blinds) Bu disappears. (D) (laughs loudly) Bu. appears, suddenly at window, gets down in half in fear and anger, makes for (D) who produces gloves. They then proceed to box when on right or left side of curtain, only one hand of each boxer is visible, gloves colored same as curtain (Bu) (knocked out) "Help!" I've killed him. (Enter Bess) with white bottle milk, gives to (Bu) who lies prostrate, soon revives (Exit) (D) and (Be) (opposite doors. (Bu) looks bewildered. "I'll bet I was run over by an automobile and I didn't get his number." (sees gloves). "No, that shrimp slammed me." (Rises, starts to door). "Revenge!" Nearly collides with (D), who says, "Where to?"

"Revenge!" (exit hastily.)

(D): "Sore, eh? Well, he'll come out of it. He's a pretty good fellow and means no harm. Believe I'll sign him, but he couldn't get by (nearest small town) with that singing.

"I have an idea." Blind released telephone appears (bell rings) (Answer) "Hello!"

(D) "That you May?"

(M) "Y-e-s."

(D) "I have an amateur up here; suppose we get Bess and rehearse the 'Mysterious Arm' act for his benefit.

(M) "I'm on." (bell rings.)

May enters right side, approaches center, taking care to hide right arm.

(Bess) enters left side, same instructions.

(D) walks to center. "We'll break him in, what say you, girls?"

(B and M together) "We will."

(D) "Shake."

Both extend right hand across center of line, taking care not to move body that any part may be seen. Both girls "out of sight" except right arm, which does stunts.

"Now, get busy." Both girls wave colored arm aloft, down to floor, zig zag fashion, etc., and hide arm and exit.

(D) "Gee, but I'm hungry." (Sits down at table.) Taps bell. Enter (M) who wipes table, arranges dishes, etc., white arm.

(D) "Is everything ready?"

(M) "Yes."

(D) (in changed voice): "Six half naked bivalves, a bowl chips and one up." (Exit M) meaning, six oysters on half shell, bowl cereal, and glass beer. (Aside) "Say, I wish this was the real thing. I'm hungry enough to eat a dead dog with the smallpox." (Enter Bu drunk); perceived by (D), who says: "Well, I've seen it twice tonight, and I believe I am yet to lose all my gold." (Bu) stops, points to forehead, shows imitation bomb, containing long fuse, staggers up to the table

(enter (M) carrying dishes.) (Bu) mystified at arm working without seeing body. (D) continues, "But in the morning I'll hire the best detective in town." (Proceeds to eat.)

(Bu) "I'll save you the trouble." (Unheard by (D) places bomb under chair, lights fuse. "Goodnight" (runs back) fuse sputters and goes out. (Bu) cautiously approaches, noise made in wings startles him several times. He picks up bomb and throws out in wings, sounds of crashing glass and rumblings are heard.

(D) (jumps to feet. (Bu hides) resumes seat at table).

"I must have been mistaken. I am all nerves since I saw it."

(Bu) "Saw what?" (wonderingly.)

(D) (pretending he was not aware of Bu's presence before.)

"Hello, Bud, I see you've had revenge."

(Bu) "Huh?"

(D) "Got soused, pickled, stewed; you're drunk. And look! 12 o'clock and you just coming in." (Clock appears, hands points to 6; as Bu looks clock disappears, reappears few feet away.)

(Bu) "Somethin' wrong around here."

(D) "There is something wrong with you. "One too many.". (Bu) ("sees things" on back curtain.) "I must be drunk."

(D) "Can you shoot when you're drunk?"

(Bu) "Better'n sober. Target appears, produces pistols.

(D) Shoots three times; three bells.

(Bu) shoots once, no bell; second shot, bell rings continuously. Both look at each other. (D) turns. (Bu) stands staring at target; shoots again. Bell stops. Target disappears. "This place is haunted." (D laughs.)

(Arm appears) (Bu.) "What's that?" (frightened.)

(D) "What's what?"

(Bu) "Didn't you see it?"

(D) "No, I never drink anything stronger than water."

(Bu) (Arm on other side appears) "There it is again."

(D) (confidingly) "Take a cup of black coffee." (leads Bu. to table) Taps bell, enter May, with tray.

"Strong cup coffee." (Exit May).

(Bu) "That arm was here again."

(D) "There, there, Bud, your coffee will be here in a minute." (soothingly.) (Enter May) (arm concealed)

(Bu) "How'd that coffee get here?"

(D) "The waiter brought it." (Bu drinks.)

(Bu) "I didn't see any waiter." (Enter May, removes cup and saucer.)

(D) "I must leave you for a few minutes. When I come back we will make up our contract. I will engage you at $10.00 per." (Exit Bu).

(Bu) "Perhaps you will and perhaps you won't. I don't like this monkey-business. I——there's that arm again." (Pulls gun, shoots at arm.) (Other work may be introduced here.) Enter (D) "How do you think you'll like the show business, Bud?"

(Bu) "If this is the show business, I'm going back to (competitive town) on my milk wagon."

(Enter Bess) (D) "Remove the gentleman's hat! Bring pen, ink and paper!" (Bess does so, arm concealed) "Now, write, 'I will join the Mysterious Arm Co., at $10.00 per week.'"

(Bu) "But I don't want to join no show."

(D) "That's what you came here for."

(Bu) "I did—"

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(Bu) "I won't."

(D) "Then (hands Bu. gun) die." (Walks down stage."

(Bu) (scared) (business) walks down slowly.

(D) "Back to back!"

(Bu) does as told.

(D) "Forward three paces, then fire! One; Two; Three!"

(Bu) Keeps on going, gets shot gun (imitation) comes back, crack of pistol, and (D) supposed to be killed) May and Bess enter quickly. Both to (Bu) "He's dead."——(Bu) (sadly) "That arm did it."

(D) (rises) (All three laugh, gather around (Bu) who is thunderstruck.

(D) "Ain't he the limit," turning to (Bu), say, Cul, you're just the guy I need. Join us and name your salary."

(Bu) (timidly) "I thought you was dead."

(D) "No, we were only having our daily rehearsal of the 'Mysterious Arm.'"

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